

SCOTTSDALE - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today announced that the third round of "donut hole" checks have gone out to eligible seniors in Arizona and around the country. Under the recently enacted Affordable Care Act, the new health care law, seniors whose prescription drug costs are so high that they fall into the Medicare prescription drug 'donut hole' coverage gap in 2010 are receiving this one-time, tax-free \$250 rebate check.

"Prescription drugs are costing seniors thousands of dollars a year," said Mitchell. "Every day, thousands of seniors have to choose between buying the prescriptions they need and putting food on the table. This check will not only help close the donut hole, but will also help strengthen Medicare and improve health care for our seniors." In Arizona, 12,942 seniors are expected to receive the rebate. Nationwide, checks are going out to more than 375,000 seniors. Beginning in January 2011, seniors in the donut hole will receive a 50% discount on brand name drugs and by 2020, the donut hole will be completely closed.

Experts estimate that more than a quarter of seniors will hit the "donut hole" this year. [Source: [Department of Health and Human Services](#), August 10, 2010] In June, more than 80,000 seniors received the rebate check; in July, more than 300,000 received the check; and now in early August, more than 375,000 are receiving it. The next round of checks is expected to be distributed in late August.

The checks are one of the benefits in the health reform legislation for seniors in the Medicare Prescription Drug program. The Affordable Care Act will also:

- Provide free preventive care services like mammograms and certain colon cancer tests and a free annual physical to Medicare beneficiaries starting in 2011;
- Save seniors an average of almost \$200 per year in premiums by 2018;
- Extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by 12 years.

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